

Project Partners

New state legislation calls for agency coordination of derelict fishing gear removal in state marine waters. Agencies and organizations involved in the project include: Northwest Straits Commission, the Marine Resources Committees of Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan, Snohomish, Clallam, Jefferson, and Island counties, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Navy, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington Sea Grant Program, Puget Sound Action Team, Tulalip Tribes, Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group, commercial fishing and diving companies, and private foundations.

Additional support and participation is welcome!

The "No-Fault" Approach

The focus of the Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Project is not on assessing blame. The goals are to remove lost and abandoned gear, to help restore Puget Sound and the Northwest Straits, to improve public safety, and to assist species recovery. The success of the project will rely on the collective efforts of citizens, government organizations and private businesses that all have an interest in healthy marine life.

What is the Northwest Straits Commission?

Acting as a board of directors for the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative, the Northwest Straits Commission is made up of citizens representing local, tribal, state, and community interests working together to protect vital marine resources. Citizen-based Marine Resources Committees, representing the seven counties of northwest Washington, are full partners in the Initiative.



NORTHWEST STRAITS
MARINE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

For more information, contact:

Northwest Straits Commission

360-428-1084

www.nwstraits.org

**Washington Department of
Fish and Wildlife**

Derelict Fishing Gear Hotline

1-800-477-6224

www.wa.gov/wdfw/fish/derelict



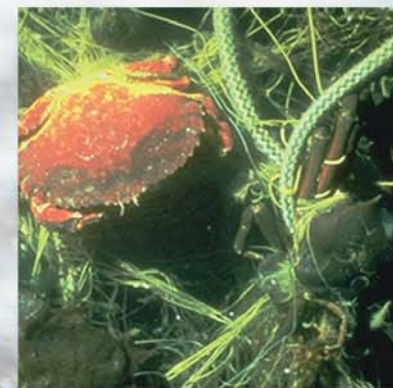
NORTHWEST STRAITS
marine conservation initiative



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www.wa.gov/wdfw/fish/derelict

DERELICT FISHING GEAR REMOVAL PROJECT



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WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

What's the Problem?

Derelict fishing gear includes nets, lines, crab and shrimp traps/pots, and other recreational or commercial harvest equipment that has been lost or abandoned in the marine environment. Modern nets and fishing line made of synthetic materials have been in use since the 1940s and can take decades, even hundreds of years, to decompose in water. Derelict fishing gear is long-lasting marine debris that poses many problems to people and to marine animals, including:

- Entangling divers and swimmers.
- Trapping and wounding or killing fish, shellfish, birds and marine mammals.
- Degrading marine ecosystems and sensitive habitats.
- Damaging propellers and rudders of recreational boats, commercial and military vessels.
- Endangering boat crews and passengers with vessel capsizing.

Unfortunately, Puget Sound is littered with derelict fishing gear. It is estimated that hundreds of tons of derelict gear have collected over time in Puget Sound and the Northwest Straits region in particular including the Strait of Juan de Fuca and northern Puget Sound from Everett to the Canadian border.



WHAT'S BEING DONE?

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The Northwest Straits Commission has initiated a pilot removal program. The *Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Project* will develop and test protocols for removing derelict fishing gear from the cold, deep waters of northwest Washington, starting in the Northwest Straits.

Four fundamental steps will build a successful recovery program:

Locating and Reporting—A toll-free hotline and a Web site have been established so that divers, fishermen, boaters, beach-goers and anyone involved with the marine environment can report sightings of derelict fishing gear in the water or on shore. Recreational divers are **strongly cautioned** to avoid the gear because of the inherent dangers – divers have died from entanglement in the past.

Verifying and Prioritizing—A database of reported gear will help set priorities for removal efforts based on threats to public safety and marine resources, hazards to navigation and other criteria.

Removing—Trained commercial divers and vessels will follow the protocols developed through this project, analyze hazards with sidescan sonar/videography to reduce risks, and will physically remove the gear from several initial locations in the waters of the Northwest Straits. Derelict gear is often encrusted with marine organisms, collectively weighing a ton or more when removed from the water. While volunteer removal of submerged gear is not recommended, organized groups may be authorized for beach removal participation.

Reusing, Recycling and Disposing—Recycling opportunities for recovered nets and crab and shrimp traps are being investigated. In some cases, recovered nets have been reused for fishing or recycled into soccer nets. In other cases, however, recovered gear will need to be disposed.

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

What You Can Do!

If you know where derelict fishing gear is located, report it by calling the WDFW Derelict Fishing Gear Hotline, using the reporting form and/or project Web site.



When you encounter derelict fishing gear:

- Stay safely away from it!
- Do not attempt removal—you may actually violate state and/or federal law.
- Record as much information as you can while you're on-site, including:

- ☐ **Location**—GPS coordinates, water depth, distance from nearby landmarks and/or common names for the area.
- ☐ **Type of Gear**—Nets (monofilament gillnet or twine-like purse seine, trawl or fish farm pens), Pots/Traps (round or square for crab or shrimp, singular or multiple), Ropes/Lines, Floats, Trawl Doors or others.
- ☐ **Details**—Date and time of sighting, your activity during sighting (beach walk, swimming/diving, boating), type of seabed, size of the gear, number and type of invertebrates, fish, birds or marine mammals entangled or dead in the gear, perceived level of threat to humans/passing vessels.
- ☐ **Contact Name**—Your name, phone number, address, and/or Email address will be very helpful if more information is needed. However, anonymous reports will be accepted.
- ☐ **Report what you see**—even if you're not sure the gear is lost or abandoned.

Also, prevent your own gear from becoming lost or abandoned—fish and boat only in approved areas, know what's below you when fishing to avoid snagging, properly dispose of all broken lines/gear, and always use "rot-cord" on traps and pots. Always report lost gear within 48 hours to aid removal efforts.

www.wa.gov/wdfw/fish/derelict
Reporting Hotline: 1-800-477-6224